SIX HITTER

George Hinton is impressed with Bailey's approach to its largest Approach

Vehicle supplied for test by: Bailey Motorhomes, South Liberty Lane, Bristol BS3 2SS. Call 0117 305 2939.

Bailey launched its first Approach motorhome last autumn, and since then the range has been extended to five models. You now have a choice between a couple of two-berth models, two four-sleepers and the six-berth 760 which we look at here.

CONSTRUCTION AND LAYOUT

A high-specification Peugeot Boxer Euro 5 underpins the Approach. Power is courtesy of a 2.2-litre, 130bhp unit with six-speed manual gearbox, while in the cab you will find twin airbags, air conditioning, cruise control and swivel seats.

Every version sits on an Al-Ko AMC extended lowline galvanised chassis, which you can see is used to maximum effect on this 7.52m motorhome. The wheelbase is 4.7m (15ft 5in) and the rear axle sits further back than usual, giving a relatively short, 1.75m rear overhang. The result is really stable handling under all load conditions at the expense of just a small widening of the turning circle.

Rear corner steadies are not fitted, but we think they are needed, as any movement inside vibrates the structure.

The big Bailey difference is, of course, its Alu-Tech, timber-free body construction. Exceptionally, the upper floor surface is 9mm plywood, while the underside has 1mm glassfibre weatherproofing, so you should never experience a spongy floor. Bailey gives a six-year bodyshell integrity guarantee, which may be extended to 10 years for a fee.

All Approaches come prepared for common accessories such as satellite dish, reversing camera, solar panel, air conditioning, awning, cycle rack, roof rack and rear ladder. The 760's layout is classic rear-lounge with a forward dinette and overcab double. Each of the potential six occupants receives a height-adjustable seatbelt.

ON THE ROAD

Al-Ko's chassis includes an MTPLM upgrade from 3,500kg to 3,850kg, giving a payload of 605kg (from our own weighing). With five average adults aboard, that would leave 230kg (4.5cwt) for their belongings.

Exploiting the handling potential of the Al-Ko chassis and a 0-50mph time in the order of 16 seconds, it has that 'on rails' feeling that instils confidence out on the highway. However, you do need to adopt a broad approach to corners to avoid clipping kerbs with that distant rear axle.

As well as reducing weight, Alu-Tech pays off with rigid construction that minimises body noise on the road. A few much lower-than-average reverberations remain, mainly from microwave oven and cab window blinds. All locker shelves are fixed and all doors close tightly. External wind noise is virtually absent.

As is so often the case, the dinette seating, though crash-tested, offers little support while cornering and could perhaps use some strategic, high-density filling.

This layout includes a rear window for some welcome through-vision. What we haven't mentioned yet is body width: Bailey now quotes this as 2.51m (8ft 2¾in) mirrors folded and 2.77m (9ft 1in), mirrors extended, which is unusually wide. We measured the latter at 2.69m (8ft 10in).

A standard Peugeot radio/CD player can be programmed to play for up to three hours with the ignition off, while high-quality JVC-branded rear speakers are fitted above the ends of the rear settees.

Steel 15in wheels have full Peugeot trims, a fifth being underslung in a rear cradle. Ride quality is compliant but on the firm side for good handling.

LIVING ABOARD

The low chassis means there's no need for an external step, the foam-insulated GRP step well being just 13in (33cm) up. The floor is on two levels with a 6in step down from the cab. Minimum headroom is 6ft 5in.

The combination of wide body and tasteful, light walnut-effect furniture, aided by a pair of Heki 2 sunroofs, gives the Bailey a warm, welcoming ambience.

Deep and comfortable foam-encased sprung upholstery is fitted nearly all round, though the dinette backrests are foam only. The long rear settees have useful cloth handles sewn into the rear edges to aid handling.

The Truma Combi gas/electric boiler, water pump and filter are located beneath the offside settee, while the electrical centre, trip switches and battery charger are behind a flap in the forward dinette seat base. Inside, above the caravan door, a control panel with a multi-function LCD screen is intuitive to operate.

Lighting is almost entirely by LED, one exception being an 8W fluorescent tube set inside the washroom doorway. There's also a twin-halogen ceiling lamp in the rear lounge. The forward kitchen/diner has 10 downlighters in total.

The rear lounge has four spotlights, two more serving the Luton. Pre-wiring for TV exists at two points, allowing the owner to install a choice of aerial/dish.

For clothes storage, there are 12 main roof lockers, five being shelved, plus >>

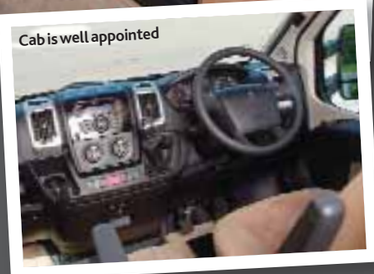
> "Wide body and walnut-effect furniture give the Bailey a welcoming ambience"

Dinette features firm, single-pedestal table

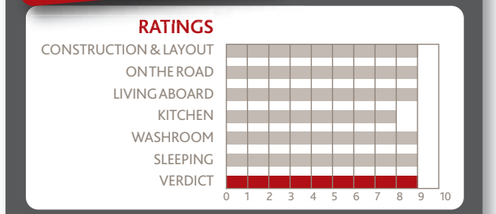
Plenty of room in the lounge, which offers some through vision

Slatted centre base slides out from underneath chest

Microwave is at a convenient low level


Cab is well appointed

TECHNICAL



RRP/as tested	£43,550/£45,000 OTR
Base vehicle	Peugeot Boxer 3500
Engine	2,198cc HDi 4-cyl DOHC 16v common-rail
Power	130bhp (74kW) @ 2,900rpm
Torque	236lb/ft (320Nm) @ 2,000-3,000rpm
Transmission	Six-speed manual, FWD
Fuel/tank/econ	Diesel/17.6gal (90 litres)/25mpg approx
Overall length	24ft 8in (7.52m)
Overall width	7ft 11in (2.42m) exc mirrors; 8ft 10in (2.69m) inc mirrors
Overall height	9ft 10in (2.99m)
Min internal height	6ft 5in (1.98m)
MRO	3,245kg (63.88cwt)
MTPLM	3,850kg (75.78cwt)
User payload	605kg (11.9cwt)
Berths	6
NCC approved	Yes

Figures supplied by manufacturer

Club insurance: 0800 028 4809 • Info: baileyapproach.co.uk

"The washbasin is within the shower cubicle. It sounds odd, but it works"

Innovative washroom has plenty of storage

two in the Luton. We expected the optional rear chest of two drawers to have a flip or pull-out tabletop, but were disappointed. The extra surface was much appreciated though.

The wardrobe is approximately two feet square and boasts an excellent 48in hanging length. Two full-depth shelves are located at the bottom – there's just a slight wheelarch intrusion and some heating tubes at the bottom.

The large free-standing table, which measures a generous 39in x 25in, stows in the wardrobe for travel, opposite the clip-on dinette table, which sits really firmly on a single pedestal.

Whale's Aquasource II inbuilt pump system fills the 22 gallon (100-litre) underfloor heated and insulated fresh water tank. The matching waste tank has its large rigid drain outlet on the offside. Latest legislation means there is a carbon monoxide detector as well as a smoke alarm.

A Varta 105Ah battery is located in the external nearside locker, which also houses the 16A mains hookup inlet (25m cable supplied). One 13kg and one 6/7kg gas cylinder can be carried in the nearside locker. Mountings for an awning and a rear cycle rack are ready-fitted.

KITCHEN

This area is distinguished by its tall roof lockers with side-hinged doors fitted with opal acrylic inserts. The worktop is 4ft 8in (1.43m) long and 25in (65cm) deep. The stainless sink, borrowed from the Bailey tourer range, comes complete with tailored polythene bowl and 19in x 12in nylon chopping board/cover. This stows with the grey ABS plastic drainer in the base locker when not required. For your electrical appliances, a 13A socket occupies the left-hand corner, together with two light switches.

The cupboard beneath the hob houses the slide-out fitted cutlery drawer at the top; there are two wire baskets beneath and more stowage below that. Shame the drawer can't just be a drawer.

Beneath the four-ring gas hob is the Thetford oven/grill unit. Dometic's RM8550 refrigerator has a generous 122-litre gross capacity and a detachable freezer compartment. The dresser, left of the entrance, is simply a 24in x 19in worktop, with the external gas locker beneath and a roof locker above. Ideal as a TV station, Bailey has mounted the 12V/230V sockets close by.

The stainless steel Baumatic microwave is set above the sink at low roof locker height, while the centrally-locked Hartal door incorporates a waste bin. Overall, it's very practical.

WASHROOM

Quite different in layout from the two-berth models, this washroom features a washbasin located within the shower cubicle. It sounds odd, but it works.

The shower tray is 38in long and 16-23in wide, though the basin means the effective length is just 28in. A water-saving showerhead, two large drains and a non-slip mat contribute to a very pleasant shower, all enclosed by tri-fold doors.

There's obviously no storage in the shower area, but a large cupboard contains five shelves to swallow your toilet bags and other gear. Thetford's improved flat-top C262 CWE rotating cassette toilet has a separate header tank allowing use of flushing additive.

The deep oval basin has a downlighter immediately overhead and there is a striplight over the doorway. Both are operated by a corded ceiling switch that children can reach.

Fittings include twin double robe hooks, tooth mug, towel/tissue holders and a long mirror. There's no window, though the five-way rooflight in the shower compartment provides plenty of light.

SLEEPING

The slatted centre base for the rear double bed simply pulls out from beneath the chest. Once the small, folded infill section has been added, the sleeping area is a comfortable 4ft 4in x 7ft 4in. Alternatively, you can form a pair of 6ft single beds by simply removing the backrest and corner cushions.

The dinette converts conventionally, the table top forming a 6ft x 3ft 7in bed – a bit small to be termed a double unless children are using it. It does not extend into the aisle, which at least means the alloy ladder for the overcab double bed need not be obstructed. Lined purple curtains supplement the Horrex pleated flyscreen/blinds, while the cab is equipped with Remis window blinds all round.

The Luton berth is 4ft 2in x 7ft, with an adequate 25 inches headroom above its luxury 4in mattress. ■

VERDICT

There were one or two minor quality glitches on our test van where heater trunking clips had torn off, but the overall picture is of a very comfortable motorhome that is a pleasure to drive and represents truly excellent value.